AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF IMAM RABBANI'S (رحمة الله عليه) WORK "ITHBAT-UN-NUBUWWAH"

By Sharjeel Ahmed[1]

Imam Rabbani Sheikh Ahmad Farooqi Sarhindi[i] رحمة الله عليه (971 Hijri/1563 CE – 1034 Hijri/1624 CE)[ii] was one of the great servants of Islam and a prominent member of the Naqshbandi Sufi order. He has been described as "Mujaddid Alf Thani", meaning the "reviver of the second millennium",[iii] for his work in rejuvenating Islam and opposing the un-islamic practices and customs prevalent in the time of Mughal Emperor Akbar.

Among the works of Imam Rabbani there is a book entitled 'Ithbat-un-Nubuwwah' which consists of 30 pages.[iv] It was written in 994 Hijri/1586 CE.[v] It provides a precise and comprehensive explanation of the topic of Prophethood and also serves as a historical account of what was happening in India in the time of Mughal Emperor Akbar.

The book 'Ithbat-un-Nubuwwah' consists of an introduction and two articles. The introduction is divided into two topics:

1. The Meaning of Nubuwwah
2. The Meaning of Mujizah

The two articles are:

1. Bithat: The Sending of Prophets عليهم السلام & its Necessity
2. The Proof of Hazrat Muhammad's صلى الله عليه وسلم Prophethood

ANALYSIS OF THE PREFACE

The preface to the book "Ithbat-un-Nubuwwah' mentions the rationale behind this work. Here are the key points and aspects of discussion found in the preface.

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1. USING METAPHOR TO EXPLAIN THE WAY THE PROPHETS عليهم السلام SHOULD BE FOLLOWED:

Imam Rabbani uses a metaphor to explain the way the Prophets عليهم السلام should be followed. He writes:

> "As a blind person entrusts himself to those who will lead him or as a helplessly ill person commits himself to the care of compassionate doctors, people must submit themselves to Prophets عليهم السلام Allah has sent so that they will attain benefits beyond mind's grasp and escape calamities."[vi]

2. HIGHLIGHTING THE DISTORTION OF ISLAMIC TEACHINGS IN INDIA

While highlighting what was happening with Islam in India, Imam Rabbani writes:

"I have seen with regret that the people of our time have become increasingly slack in believing in the necessity of Prophets' عليهم السلام coming, in the twenty-five Prophets whose names are given in the Qur'an, and in obeying the religion brought by the Last Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Moreover, some powerful people with authoritative positions in India have been persecuting pious Muslims who diligently follow Islam. There have appeared people who mock the blessed name of the Last Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and substitute the blessed names given to them by their parents with absurd names. Sacrificing a cow, which is Wajib for Muslims to butcher during Eid-ul-Adha, has been prohibited in India. Mosques are either being demolished or turned into museums or stores. Islamic cemeteries are being made into playgrounds or places for rubbish. Disbelievers' churches are being restored in the name of monuments. Their rituals and festivals are being celebrated by Muslims, too. In short, Islam's requirements and Islamic customs are being abhorred or totally abandoned. They are being called "retrogressive." Disbelievers' and atheists' customs, false religions, immoral and shameless acts are being praised. Efforts are being made to spread them. Depraved and squalid books, novels and songs of the Indian disbelievers are being translated into the languages of Muslims and sold. In this way efforts to annihilate Islam and Islam's beautiful ethics are being carried on which result in Muslims' faith weakening while unbelievers and rejecters are increasing. Moreover, even men of religion, who must be healers for the disease of disbelief, are falling for this disaster and drifting into calamity."[vii]

3. STATING THE CAUSES BEHIND THE RELIGIOUS IGNORANCE AND MISGUIDANCE

While telling us the causes behind the religious ignorance and misguidance he found among the people of India, Imam Rabbani writes:

"I have studied the causes for this corruption in Muslim children's belief and have scrutinized the origin of their doubts. I have come to the conclusion that there is only one reason for the slackness in their faith. And the reason is that much time has elapsed since Rasulullah صلى الله عليه وسلم, while at the same time some fanatical, short-sighted, religiously nescient politicians and some ignoramuses, who pass themselves off as scientists, talk on religious matters and have their words accepted as true. I have spoken with people who read and believe the writings of such fanatics of science and who therefore describe themselves as enlightened, modern people. I have seen that they err mostly in comprehending the rank of Prophethood (Nubuwwah)."[viii]

4. POINTING OUT AND REPLYING TO THE ARGUMENTS

In the preface, Imam Rabbani has also pointed out some arguments of the so-called intellectuals of his time and then replied to them. Here we quote one of those arguments along with the reply of Imam Rabbani.

Argument:

"One who has heard of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his miracles but who disbelieves this information because centuries have passed ever since, is like a person who lives in the mountains or in a desert and has not heard about the Prophet at all."[ix]

Reply:

"We have not seen the medical scientist Calinos or the grammarian Amr Sibawaih. How do we know that they were experts in those branches of knowledge? We know what the science of medicine means. We read Calinos's books and hear some of his statements. We learn that he gave medicine to the ill and cured them. Hence we believe that he was a doctor. Likewise, when a person who knows the science of grammar reads Sibawaih's books or hears some words of his, he knows and believes that he was a grammarian. By the same token, if a person knows well what Prophethood is and studies the Qur'an and the Hadith, he will understand thoroughly that Hazrat Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم was in the highest grade of Prophethood. As one's belief in the above-mentioned scholars would never be upset, so the slanders and vilifications of the ignorant and deviated will never undermine one's faith in Hazrat Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, since all the sayings and behaviours of Hazrat Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم guide people to perfection, make their beliefs and behaviours correct and

useful, and illuminate their hearts so as to cure them of diseases and disencumber them of bad habits. This is what Prophethood (Nubuwwah) means."[x]

5. IDENTIFYING THE TARGET AUDIENCE OF THE BOOK

While identifying the target audience of his book, Imam Rabbani writes:

"With the intention of removing the doubts and suspicions of those who acquired their religious knowledge from the books of religiously ignorant people and from the venomous pens of the enemies of the religion, I have thought of writing what I know."[xi]

6. STATING THE OBJECTIVES OF THE BOOK

Imam Rabbani states that the objectives of his book are:

- To explain what Prophethood means.
- To eliminate the doubts of the unbelievers concerning the Prophethood of Hazrat Muhammad صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم .
- To display the wickedness and harms of a few bigots of science who attempt to suppress this fact with their personal thoughts and opinions.[xii]

Besides this, Imam Rabbani has also mentioned in the preface that in this book he will cite documents from the books of Islamic scholars and add his humble thoughts too. This can be termed as the methodology that Imam Rabbani took for writing this book.

ANALYSIS OF THE INTRODUCTION

In the first part of the introduction, Imam Rabbani explains the meaning of Prophethood. He clearly describes here the difference between the understanding of the scholars of Kalam and the understanding of the Greek philosophers on the issue of Prophethood. He cites Sayyad Sharif Al-Jurjani's book Sharh-ulMawaqif while defining prophethood. Finally he points out the incoherence of the conditions the Greek philosophers have put for Prophethood.

In the second part of the introduction, Imam Rabbani explains the meaning of Mujizah. Here too Imam Rabbani cites Sayyad Sharif Al-Jurjani while explaining the meaning of Mujizah. He explains the concept point-wise and also provides answers to the questions commonly raised regarding Mujizah. He also answers to the questions that are raised on the explanation given by Sayyad Sharif Al-Jurjani.

ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST ARTICLE

In the first article of the book, Imam Rabbani discusses the necessity of sending of the Prophets علیہم السلام and also supports his explanation with rational arguments. For example, he writes:

"Denial of what cannot be comprehended is the result of not comprehending, not knowing."[xiii]

"As sense organs cannot comprehend things that are known by wisdom, likewise, wisdom cannot perceive the things that are known by the power of Prophethood."[xiv]

"Those who doubt the existence of the power of Prophethood doubt its possibility or, if its possibility is accepted, its occurrence. Its existence or occurrence shows that it is possible. And its existence is demonstrated by Prophets' عليهم السلام giving information beyond the intellect's ability. This information, which cannot be acquired through the intellect, calculation or experimentation, was acquired only from Allah's Ilham (inspiration placed upon the heart by Allah or His angels)."[xv]

"The intellect's finding something beautiful, ugly or nonsensical is not always valid."[xvi]

"The inability of the intellect to grasp the benefit of the things does not show the absence of their value."[xvii]

In the first article of the book, Imam Rabbani has also cited Imam Ghazali's work Al-Munqidh *Min-ad-Dalal*. Moreover, he has replied to a series of questions raised by the so-called intellectuals. For example:

Question:

> "The intellect does the thing it finds useful and does not do the thing it considers harmful. When it cannot understand whether something is useful or harmful, it does it when there is need to do it. In view of this function of the intellect, sending Prophets عليهم السلام is unnecessary."[xviii]

Answer:

> "There are many things which are misunderstood or which cannot be understood by the intellect, and they have to be taught by Prophets عليهم السلام. A Prophet عليهم السلام is like a specialized doctor. He knows the effects of medicines well. The effects of some medicines might be found by laymen through the intellect after long experiences, but men of intellect might face risks and harms before learning them, and it would require a great deal of time and work. They would have no time left for using their intellect in doing other necessary jobs. By giving the doctor a little recompense, however, they attain the benefits of medicines and rid themselves of their illnesses. To say that Prophets عليهم السلام are unnecessary is like saying that doctors are unnecessary.

Since the commandments taught by a Prophet عليهم السلام are Wahi revealed by Allah, they are all true and beneficial. The doctor's knowledge, although being the result of thought and experience, cannot be said to be wholly true."[xix]

ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND ARTICLE

In the second article of the book, Imam Rabbani writes about the proof of the Prophet Hazrat Muhammad's صلى الله عليه وسلم Prophethood. In addition to the rational arguments, he mostly uses here the question-answer technique to explain the things and answer to the arguments of those who deviated from the right path. For example:

Question:

"Useful things reported by philosophers, materialists and doctors, are believed because they have been discovered by experience. Ibadat are not believed in because their usefulness has not been experienced."[xx]

Answer:

"Scientists' experimentations are believed when they are heard of. The things reported and experienced by Awliya عليهم الرحمة are communicated in the same manner. Also, the benefits of most things enjoined by Islam have been seen and experienced. Even if the advantages within the rules of Islam were not revealed by experimentation, it would still be reasonable to believe in them and to fulfill their requirements. Let us suppose that a physician's wise son, who does not know anything about drugs, becomes ill. He has heard from many people and has even read in newspapers about his father's achievements and knows that his father loves him very much. His father gives him some medicine and says that if he takes it he will recover immediately, for he has tried it several times. But when he sees that the medicine will be injected and hurt him, would it be reasonable for him to react to his father by saying, "I have never tried this medicine. I don't know if it is good for me. I can't believe if your words are correct." Who in the world would approve such an answer?" [xxi]

In the second article of the book, Imam Rabbani has also cited Imam Fakhr-ud-Din Al-Razi's work *Al-Matalib-ul-Aliyya.* Imam Rabbani also talks about the importance of *Tasawwuf* in strengthening one's faith. He writes:

"A person who acquires knowledge of Prophethood and then studies the Qur'an and the Hadîth will perfectly understand that Hazrat Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم is the Prophet and occupies the highest degree of Prophethood. And if he learns of the effectiveness of his words in purifying the heart and

then obeys him, by which his own heart begins to see the truth, his belief in his Prophethood will become absolutely certain (Yaqin). He will gain continuous realization of the truth in the Hadiths, "If a person lives up to his knowledge, Allah teaches him what he does not know"; "He who helps a cruel person will suffer harm from him," and, "The person who only thinks of attaining Allah's love every morning will be given his wishes for this world and the Hereafter by Allah." Thus his knowledge and faith will be strengthened. For the faith to become strengthened, that is, to improve it up to a state wherein one feels as if one sees the reality, requires endeavouring in a path of Tasawwuf."[xxii]

Finally, Imam Rabbani ends his book with these statements:

"The Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم sorted out the beautiful habits from the ugly ones and the good deeds leading to felicity from the bad ones leading to perdition. He taught true Iman and Ibadat. Those who believed him were enlightened by this Iman and Ibadat. He rescued humanity from distorted, concocted religions. He attained the victory promised by Allah. All his enemies soon perished. Depraved, factious, provocative words and actions came to an end. People were rescued from dictators, usurpers and the cruel. Every place became illuminated with the sacred lights of the sun of Tawhid and the moon of Tanzih."[xxiii]

"Hence it has become clear that the ancient Greek philosophers were on the wrong way and that those who read the harmful books which they have written with their personal points of view on religion and prophethood will acquire wrong religious information and will drift towards perdition."[xxiv]

وما توفیق الا باللہ العلی العظیم

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بسم اللہ الرحمٰن الرحیم

نحمدہٗ ونصلی علی رسولہ الکریم

یادگاریں

پیغامات ومقالات:



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لَهُمُ الْبُشْرٰى فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْاٰخِرَةِ (سورہ یونس:۶۴)

(انہیں خوش خبری ہے دنیا کی زندگی میں اور آخرت میں)

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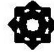
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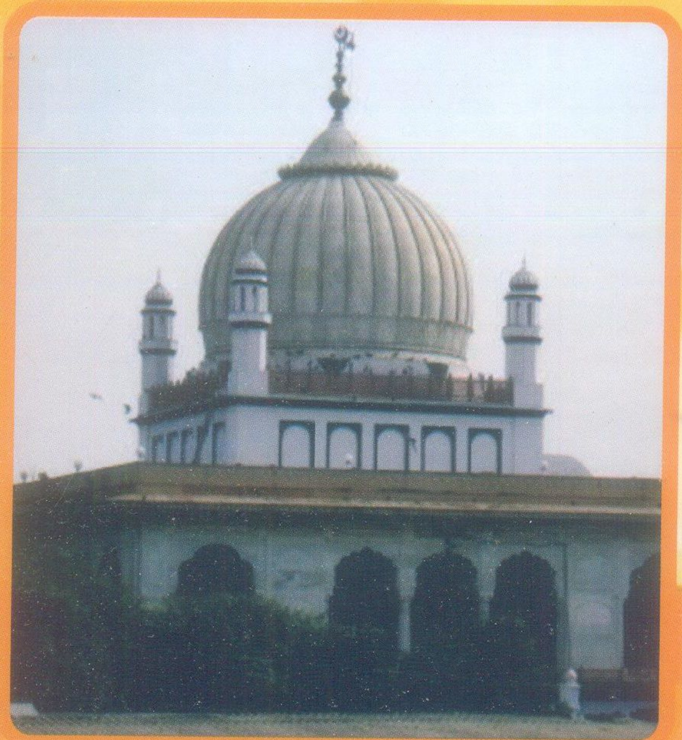
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لَهُمُ الْبُشْرٰی فِی الْحَیٰوةِ الدُّنْیَا وَفِی الْاٰخِرَةِ

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